

## Litany in Which Certain Things Are Crossed Out

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## Litany in Which Certain Things Are Crossed Out

by [lazykitkat](#)

### Summary

*Dream could kiss him.*

*He could kiss him and maybe then, everything would come to life- opening doors that have been shut for so long, filling oceans with a fear of loving again. Maybe everything would burn and he knows he wouldn't mind dancing in the flames with the other. He's greedy, so greedy. The knight wants and wants more than he should, more than he knows is promised in a life such as his. But he can't stop himself from wanting to dance with the man beside him, can't stop himself from twisting each atom in his body as a shield for his prince. He wants to run his thumb along the side of a royal jaw, rub soft on bottom lips which will be blue and purple once he's done with them.*

*But he doesn't.*

(In which Dream is a knight and George is his king.)

### Notes

Quick reminder, if Dream Team or anyone in my fics express that fanfiction makes them uncomfortable and they'd rather it not be published, I will take this down.

Extra: The poem is not written by me, it's by Richard Siken from his poet collection- Crush.  
The title of the poem is the title of the fic.

Other than that, enjoy~

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

*Every morning the maple leaves.*

*Every morning another chapter where the hero shifts*

*from one foot to the other. Every morning the same big*

*and little words all spelling out desire, all spelling out*

~

There's a small clearing that they play in as children, it's not a secret but no one goes there anymore so it's theirs now. It's down past the royal gardens, across the moat which sinks lower during the summer and where the cicadas sing. It's just them this time, Sapnap is too young to be allowed outside the castle walls after sunset and they were only allowed to leave after promising the younger that they wouldn't have too much fun without him. Dream's pants are too long for him- his mother said that he'd grow into them, that he's a growing boy but they get in the way and he doesn't like them.

"What are we going to do?" George asks, trailing behind Dream cautiously, not used to crossing terrain of large roots and prickly vines. They don't have as long as they would have wanted- the young prince needs to go back to the castle before dinner or else people will notice and start to panic.

"What do you want?" Green eyes are distracted by the sleeping blooms who had already closed shop for the night, "Your mum will get mad if you have mud on your shoes."

"No, the maids will get mad," The shorter boy plays with the buttons of his blue tunic, "Ma will just be disappointed I can't eat steak with fifteen spoons."

"Fifteen?"

"And that's only the spoons."

"Who eats steak with a spoon?" Dream grins, taking a leap closer to the prince who gives him a smaller smile in return. He notices how he's as tall as George now- despite being two years younger and when he points it out, he's shoved in the shoulder.

"I might be able to carry you when I'm your knight."

"My knight? Who says you'll be my knight?" The prince flicks the side of his neck but there's something fond, "You get scared when Bad tells scary stories."

He falters in his thought, he's never thought of a life where he's not serving George, "I dunno. I always guessed you would pick me."

It sounds stupid when it leaves his lips but his heart feels heavy and something nasty grows at the pit of his stomach. He fiddles with his fingers nervously, looking away because he's worried about what he'll see if he looks at the prince. Smaller hands cup his jaw, hands which treat him kind and gentle, tilting his chin upwards slightly so that green meets the darker eyes of a stubborn royal. Dream had forgotten how much he likes the way George looks at him, like he's something George will always be grateful for.

"What?"

"Smile you idiot," The prince murmurs, "You look ugly when you're sad."

"I'm not sad."

"You are. A little bit."

The blonde isn't sure what he should say to that, "Let go of my face."

"Smile."

"I am smiling-"

"No you're not," Dark eyes look thoughtful, "Dream, I was joking you know, of course, I'm going to choose you."

"Really?" He doesn't like how hopeful he sounds.

"Who else am I supposed to pick?" George lets go of the other's face and takes a small step back, "I always choose you."

He does, in a way. It's Dream who keeps the young prince entertained at long balls, who races him to the stables on their horses. It's Dream who listens to him cry when the adults feel a little too tall and the castle walls are a little too cold. It's Dream who takes George out of the castle when he wants to get away- leading him somewhere where they're just themselves under a kinder sun or lovelier moon.

"Always," The ten-year old repeats slowly, his voice fading, "I'd pick you too."

The other smiles and he's not sure how but this feels important. Like a promise without a contract, without a signature. Everything seems a little brighter even though the days are growing old, casting longer shadows which don't scare him because he feels safe here, with George. It all seems to dim a bit after a while and neither of the boys know how to break the awkward silence that befalls them.

"We have an hour," He kicks a stone on the ground, "We have an hour to do whatever we want and we're just standing here."

"There's nothing to do," George mumbles, "Hide and seek is no fun with two people. Especially when one of them is you."

He's not sure if that's a compliment or insult, he's just really good at running away and finding what he needs. He's only ten but he can outrun the flock of manservants who chase him down when he steals dessert down the hallways and can sneak past the guards to visit George in the royal chambers when he feels a little bored. His knees are dirty and bruised but he doesn't mind as much as his mother will, mind scattering around to find something that they can play.

“Let’s get lost,” Dream looks at the sycamore trees that surround the clearing, any paths that may have existed before were now invaded by stray shrubbery and homeless daisies, “It’ll be like an adventure.”

“Lost?” He hears, “It’s so dark now.”

“You’ll be fine,” He nudges him in the side, “You have me.”

George looks back at the twisted path they had taken to reach here and then ahead to where Dream had pointed.

“Fireflies.” He says finally, stepping closer to Dream, “We can catch them for Sap, he’ll cry if we don’t get him anything.”

“A whole jar of ‘em,” He grins, “What about for you?”

“Remember that book we read, on will o wisps?” The prince starts to follow the other further into the forests, “I want to see one.”

He lends his hand out and when the other takes it, he feels right, warm, home.

“C’mon then, let’s go.”

~

*You will be alone always and then you will die.*

*So maybe I wanted to give you something more than a catalog*

*of non-definitive acts,*

*something other than the desperation.*

~

By now, he’s built a reputation among the king’s men.

A hard worker, hours spent and wasted to perfecting each switch of his blades, each shot of his bow. A monster, heartlessly spilling because the Crown demands of it, drowning himself in the adrenaline that sent him in a high and left him craving for more. A patriarch who serves his kingdom first and then himself, who’d rather take an arrow than see his people die. They’re all exaggerated to some extent, but it builds him a name where the people watch him because he’s whispered to be the next great savior who will win them a battle.

His tunic is wet, not from blood- it’s been a while since one of the other knights has been able to cut through his shield. Training is over for the afternoon and he’s pretty sure that he stinks of sweat and metal.

“George is watching again,” Sapnap says beside him, not looking up from his wooden practice blade, “You’d think the prince would have better things to do.”

“I don’t see why checking the training of his kingdom’s best line of defence is unproductive,” He frowns and his best friend snorts to himself, “What?”

“He’s watching you. Like always,” The other was smiling knowingly, “He’s mes-mer-ized.”

“Shut up,” His cheeks are flushed and Sapnap laughs, hitting his back. He looks back out to the training field, where George is sitting under the shade. He’s leaning back, lazily skimming over the knights who are flooding the doors to leave- afterall it was almost midnight. Their eyes meet and the prince waves before looking away.

“He’s not looking anymore,” He tells Sapnap as if he’s trying to prove a point but he’s not exactly sure what.

“Sure,” His best friend picks up his wooden melee, “I gotta go. Send Georgie my love okay?”

Sapnap is an idiot, he has to tell himself as he readjust his sleeves, he’s an idiot who knows him too well and that’s enough to scare the knight. He watches as the other’s back retreats through the main gates that led out of the training grounds, mind buzzing about a bit of everything. He closes his eyes and tilts his head upwards as he leans back against the wall.

He hears footsteps.

They aren’t light against the ground so he knows it’s not a servant- there’s no clattering of metal so he’s pretty sure it’s not a knight who came back because they left something behind. No, the footsteps demand his attention and when he hears them stop in front of him, he knows better than to just ignore them.

“You missed training,” Dream murmurs, slowly opening his eyes with a sloth that could be sinned, “We pointed sharp things at Bad again.”

“Then I didn’t miss anything out of the ordinary,” He looks down and it hits him how much he missed George, “We arrived from Mercen this morning.”

He was only gone for a week, barely anything but the knight felt lost with his compass pointing somewhere so far that he couldn’t reach. It’s been seven sunsets since he’s been able to touch George somewhere beyond the vague swirls which haunt him when he sleeps, it’s been seven sunrises since he’s been able to drown himself in the other voice, honey and gold. Sap had told him one day that he was mourning. Dream told him to shut up.

“Sap said you were looking at me again,” he says and carefully watches the unfamiliar expression that clouds over the prince’s face.

“I’m always looking at you,” George hums, playing with the hilt of the dagger in Dream’s belt, unsheathing it and twirling it around.

“He said that too,” The knight isn’t looking at the prince anymore, letting himself be distracted with the knife. His heart is singing, he doesn’t know what song and he doesn’t know if he likes it. It doesn’t feel like a song that the likes of him should be listening to. A forbidden hymn that burns mortal ears but he’s captivated and he never wants to forget it.

“Sapnap being right? There’s a first time for everything, I suppose,” The shorter man takes the dagger, resting the hilt against his palm and letting the tip of the blade press against Dream’s chin. The prince tilts it upwards forcing their eyes to meet, green losing against darker brown: “What else did he say?”

“That you were mesmerized,” He should really stop telling George these things, “By me.”

He wishes he knew how to keep his mouth shut, that he knew how to keep the doors to his chest

closed. But he can't help it, not when George makes him feel a magnitude of feelings that send him in the air, when he feels like whole oceans are rising in him when the other speaks. If he doesn't say anything out loud, then he drowns in his own heart. If he does, there's no destroying whatever forbidden thing that has them both trapped in a spider web, not when they're out in the open so boldly. There's no winning here and all Dream can do is wait until he's utterly destroyed.

"Is that so?" The tip of the blade runs down his throat and he can feel George's eyes run down his body with it. It stops in front of his heart: "I don't think I like this whole Sapnap being right thing."

"Yeah," The knight finds it hard to breathe, "I don't think I do either."

"Idiot," George sounds fond, "How are you supposed to protect me if you're all frozen like that."

His shoulders drop immediately. The prince laughs as the blonde finds his cheeks go warm. Silence.

"You haven't said my name yet," Dream murmurs.

George lifts the dagger, running his thumb against the blade, "No, I haven't."

"Will you say it?" He presses, taking a small step forward so he towers over the prince, so close that he thinks he's burning, burning, burning. He should step away, it would be safer but dark eyes lock his place, almost challenging him to run away.

"We really need to do something about you being taller than me."

"*George .*"

He laughs, wrapping his arms around Dream's neck, and leaned in closer, "I like you right here, with me."

There's something cool and cruel that threatens to cut his skin but it doesn't matter. He hadn't noticed it, too distracted by the other to care enough but he knows George of all people won't make that choice. He's safer here with a weapon to his throat than out in town. But he can't focus on that, not when his mind screams about how he can feel how warm George is and how much their heartbeats seem to shake their cages to break free.

"I could disarm you, right now."

George lets his arms fall to his side, stepping back with a smile, "You're right. But you can't let yourself be so easily distracted."

"It's hard when I'm with a pretty prince."

"Careful now Dream," He hears in honey and everything feels all that much more real, "I don't want to lose you just yet."

~

*Dear So-and-So, I'm sorry I couldn't come to your party.*

*Dear So-and-So, I'm sorry I came to your party*

*and seduced you*

*and left you bruised and ruined, you poor sad thing.*

It takes him a while but he realises that he lives life a bit like a fairytale.

He remembers it clearly, he was in one of his finer suits of chainmail with smiles that lied more than they cared and he remembers the night was lovely. The ballroom decorated with exotic candles far east and tapestries woven with the silkiest of threads and told history on the walls. They'd be interesting if Dream hadn't had the history of his kingdom drilled into him as a squire, still bright and naive. The music wasn't one he heard at the tavern, instead the symphony of elegant strings and grandiose voices who spent years mimicking the songs of sirens as noblemen and their ladies swayed to the melody. He remembers that the chef had outdone themselves that night, remembering how when his eyes glazed over the banquet table- he felt emptier at the feast fit for royalty.

But he's not here for that, it's obvious for every soul who looked at him too long, noticing the blade in its sheath and the green eyes who filled the castle's gossip as the next captain of the guard, the youngest one at that. He's here to fulfill a duty, an oath, a promise which he swore to keep till death did him wrong.

His eyes fall on the man a few feet ahead of him, robes of silk and something more expensive- with a practiced smile worn by monsters who lure their prey into false safety. They're both armed under the fantastical chandelier that makes the shadows dance, arm with something different; one with a sword and another with a crown.

George looks like a king, Dream thinks to himself- falling silent by his companion's side when politics is brought up in the conversation. It's not a far off observation, not when George is next in line, heir to the world. He will be, one day, the most powerful man in the room- all eyes mesmerised with the riches they think come out of thin air, the land home to a thousand citizens in gratitude to their monarch. Eyes follow the wave of his hand, the turn of his lips and the knight doesn't know if everyone else is really looking if they're ever able to look away.

"I need to breathe," He hears his prince murmur and the aristocrat is sensible enough to know that he's dismissed, "Take me outside."

It's an order, directed at Dream but it doesn't feel like one. George's voice feels like golden honey, slow and lazy, and the knight knows himself to be a big enough of an idiot to do whatever was told of him. He nods, taking charge- not too fast that the prince falls behind but not too slow that they grow lost in the crowd. The guests recognise royalty and his unspoken request of solidarity, fleeing the gardens trimmed just right for the brightest blooms. Soon it's just him and George, under the moon alone while the rest of the world drowns itself in vices of talk and dance.

"You look nice tonight," He murmurs and the other's red maroon cloak turns in the wind. Dark eyes narrow, the way they always do when Dream is a bit too honest and George doesn't know how to handle it. He wears a gold circlet, it's only for gatherings as grand as tonight and it adorns the prince like a halo- the mark of a fallen angel playing with mortals who would serve no other.

"Do I?" The piano from the ballroom falls silent and the knight thinks if he tried hard enough, he could hear the stars, "Am I nice enough to dance with?"

"You're royalty," Dream says with casual nonchalance, "They'd be a fool to say no."

"Would you?" George is looking at him again- that way which makes him want to burn, "Would you say no?"

“Do you take me as a fool?”

“One of us walks around dressed like the tinman,” George has his hands on the railing and he’s smiling, “And it’s not me.”

“You really should pay me more for waving a stick around and saving your life.” Dream leans with his back against the balcony and his arms crossed. The night dances, fading into paler purples and pinks while the stars who are left serenade those under a sleeping moon. Who they serenade, he does not know but he wishes it were him and George, a knight and his prince.

Dream could kiss him.

He could kiss him and maybe then, everything would come to life- opening doors that have been shut for so long, filling oceans with a fear of loving again. Maybe everything would burn and he knows he wouldn’t mind dancing in the flames with the other. He’s greedy, so greedy. The knight wants and wants more than he should, more than he knows is promised in a life such as his. But he can’t stop himself from wanting to dance with the man beside him, can’t stop himself from twisting each atom in his body as a shield for his prince. He wants to run his thumb along the side of a royal jaw, rub soft on bottom lips which will be blue and purple once he’s done with them.

But he doesn’t.

Because George is untouchable. In the same way the moon brings the tides closer with it’s song but the ocean can never reach, in the same way he’ll rule the world one day in a castle oh so high that he is scared he will not be able to reach. George is untouchable and Dream wants to touch him, kiss every bit of skin and memorise the way their bodies fit.

“I wouldn’t by the way. Dance with you.” George’s face falls- just barely but the knight picks up on it.

“You wouldn’t?” The other echoes and he nods.

“Because I know you hate to dance,” He mumbles but the other hears it, a small smile growing, “Because I know you’d rather be somewhere else than a ballroom.”

Something in the prince’s face grows confident, bolder by the second, “I’d rather be with yo-”

Someone calls them from the courtyard, a guest or servant- it doesn’t matter. The little world under the moon breaks, fading away as George sends him a regretful face and has to walk away. He won’t be alone for long- not when Dream has the duty to follow him wherever but the knight needs a bit of time to himself.

Because it all feels like a fairytale, the little stories they told children before bed. The ones about the knights and dragons- princes and their princesses. The ones with happy endings of a man and a woman in a castle far away from the imperfections of the world. But this isn’t their story, this isn’t his story.

Because if life was a fairytale, he thinks as he watches George slip on his crown and delight the noble, Dream has no place in it.

~

*You want a better story. Who wouldn’t?*

*A forest, then. Beautiful trees. And a lady singing.*



*Love on the water, love underwater, love, love and so on.*

*What a sweet lady. Sing lady, sing! Of course, she wakes the dragon.*

~

There's blood on the crown when George is coronated.

There are two black coffins engraved in stones more precious than human lives, buried under the willow trees which guard the royal cemetery. The castle is dressed in blacks- Dream thinks George looks terrible in black, especially when his skin is paler than the new ghosts which haunt him, when his shoulders want to cave in under the pressure of a whole kingdom. The knight can only watch, there's nothing he can really do to help. They match now, he thinks bitterly, the youngest king and the youngest captain of the guards.

The king has most under the pretense that he'll never crack, spinning a lie so that even Dream believes it for a moment. He wonders if George is trying to believe it himself. Their borders are being tested and pushed, the prices of trades have been raised. There's whisper that the new King is too young to reign supreme, too young that he'll break apart the kingdom like a careless child with a toy.

"We'll be riding out tomorrow," George looks up from the papers in his hands, "At dawn. Gather your men by then, the southern battlements are due for inspection."

He looks tired, as if he were to drop dead any moment. The king is fitted with new clothes now, nothing like he wore before. They're inspired by the royal crest and he's almost unrecognisable under the splendor and elegance. But it doesn't help the other's heavy breathing and dark bags.

"That can be sorted out later," Dream starts and continues before the other can argue, "The southern battlements are three days away- we'd need a week to prepare."

George frowns, "We can't wait that long."

"Yes, yes we can," The knight empties the other's hands and sets them on the mahogany desk, "George, the world waits for you now."

His shoulders are still hunched and his posture is still stiff. He doesn't seem to be listening, he doesn't do that as much anymore. He disconnects, lost somewhere where no one can reach him and bring him back home, no matter how loud they shout- how hard the snap is for his attention. Well, everyone but Dream. He's always been able to bring back George. However, the knight doesn't try to wake the king from whatever nightmare he's drowned himself in. No- he follows the other, shield equipped and eyes determined because this is his oath, to protect royal blood from enemies, from friends, from family, from themselves.

"Breathe," He watches the king's chest rise and deflate, "You need to take better care of yourself."

"Too busy." Pretty eyes flutter shut and golden honey hums, "There's so much left."

"I know," He says softly as he rubs circles on George's lower back, "Talk it through with me, bit by bit."

The king collapses on the lounge, lying down flat on his back as Dream sits on the floor with his back against the foot of the sofa. If he leans back then he can feel George's skin touch him and the night is too deep, too quiet for him to burn alive tonight. The other drops his right hand and it hangs off the couch aimlessly. The knight wants to hold it, of course he does. He wants to run his

fingers along the creases of the king's fingers, small marks of borders that he wishes he had the courage to build a bridge and cross.

But he doesn't.

"It's dizzy," George murmurs quietly, "I can't ever think properly anymore. Something is always happening."

"The herbalist could help," He offers, "I can go have a servant bring something for you."

"I don't need it." He's looking away, something distant growing in his eyes. The knight watches his king carefully, the way he holds him differently now- more dignified, more guarded. His jawline is sharper and he shares only the bare features of his child's self. He's dressed in the colours of a king, blue and gold and even with no crown to decorate him or a tall stature to tower over, he stands stronger than he has before.

George looks a bit like a stranger, he thinks, he feels like one too. Their hands intertwine as he plays with the other's fingers, rubbing small circles in softer palms. They feel different. Stiffer and colder, their hands don't fit together as perfectly as they did when they were children. His own hands are different too, the king running lines along the callouses which have formed over the few months he was appointed captain of the guard. Dream wonders if he feels like a stranger to George, if he holds any semblance to before he killed his first man. Growing up has made George's eyes lighter but he knows that his own have only grown darker.

But he thinks it's fine. Because if George is a stranger then Dream will be the one to lend a hand and say hello so they spiral down the same path together again. Falling in love with George is the easy part, something that happens faster than a blink of an eye, something as natural as the sun setting as the moon rises. It's never been hard. He can learn, Dream wants to learn every scar the other dons proudly, he wants to remember every part of the other, he wants to kiss every new face. He wants to be able to pull this stranger close till he makes another oath, this one he promises to never forget, always remember.

"Are you scared George?" He says quietly and for a moment, when nothing but silence answers him, he thinks he's alone.

"I'll be less scared tomorrow."

Dream faces the king, a breed of mild curiosity and confusion lingering on his face: "Tomorrow?"

"Another day the kingdom hasn't fallen apart," Dream opens his mouth to protest but the other silences him with a fond smile, "Another day Sapnap hasn't burnt down the central town. Another day-"

"Another day?"

He looks incredibly fond when he looks at the blonde that it hurts his lungs, he looks like he's home, "Another day you're still by my side."

He doesn't know what fills him, maybe love but he doesn't think about it. He takes George's hands, on impulse, and presses his own chapped lips against kind knuckles, fleeting like a butterfly, static like the bees which poison and sting him all over whenever they touch. Royalty flushes in roseblood and the knight thinks that the other looks stunning in blue and divine in gold. He still looks like a stranger, a gorgeous stranger who will steal his breath away again.

But he fell in love with his prince, he knows that he can fall in love with his king as well.

~

*Love always wakes the dragon and suddenly*

*flames everywhere.*

*I can tell already you think I'm the dragon,*

*that would be so like me, but I'm not. I'm not the dragon.*

*I'm not the princess either.*

~

“Do not order him another drink.”

Gold honey pulls his head up from the wooden table, Dream's head a little dizzy as he tries to refocus on the king. The lights of the tavern are dim and mild, leaving the centre of the room illuminated while the corners a faded dark. It's a commoner's pub, the mead isn't as rich as it would be if served on the royal dinner table and it's stronger- losing a delicacy that doesn't make his world spin. But he likes it.

“Sap,” He slurs and his best friend grins, calling for another waiter despite George's indignation, “You're so good to me.”

It's the three of them on this table, in tunics of bare minimum design and in dull colours of red and yellow. Skeppy and Ant are trying to pull Bad away from the betting table, all of them blending into the festive cheer without a hitch. None of them bore the royal insignia, trying to keep a low-profile and just enjoy the night without the titles and crowns. There's a warm hum, a sum of liveliness from the crowd and it's comforting to just lean back and waste away in companion.

“Let him be George,” Sappnap pushes the glass towards the blonde knight with a wild grin, “Hey miss, can I have another one?”

“Please,” Dream adds as helpful as he can while being half delirious, “Say please Pandas.”

“Don't forget that I'm paying,”

“Oh?” Sappnap sticks his tongue out, “Three shots instead, please.”

Dream cheers as George groans and shakes his head in feign resignation. The king gives in, his quiet demeanor loosening as he lets himself smile. The knight likes the smile, a lot. It makes him feel warm, warmer than the alcohol that he chugs down his throat. Usually he'd wonder why but right now, he doesn't want to think. He's been doing it a lot recently, thinking that is. Thinking about the battle formations for his troops out west, thinking about the protection of his king, thinking about how George would fit against him. His cheeks flush, from the mead or his own heart- he's not sure. He's thinking too much again so he scowls, grabbing for another glass.

There's a clattering of plates and glass against the wooden planks, someone calling out for help. Dream hears Bad's name and he hears screaming. They're loud and he sinks down into the table again, barely noticing Sappnap rising from his seat beside him to handle them. He leans into his best friend who pats his back sympathetically, mumbling a few words to take things slow before leaving him alone with George.

“Your breath is going to stink,” George looks at him, sipping at his own mead.

“Doesn’t matter,” He murmurs, “No one’s kissing me tonight.

The other blinks, amusement taking over his features, “That just sounds sad.”

“I’m not sad.”

“I wasn’t saying you were, love.” George shakes his head when someone offers to refill his shot, “No more for him either.”

*Love.* The king should really stop calling him things like that. It distracts the knight too much, messing with his head too much that it’s all he can think about when they’re apart, all he wants to hear when they’re together. It’s a new development, usually a slip of the tongue followed by a gentle smile and it makes Dream want to pull him closer. If he blanks out this night tomorrow morning, he knows himself well enough to remember this at least. His mind replays it like a broken song and he’s sure that the king is visiting him in his dreams tonight.

“It’s nice tonight.” George says and distracts himself with the paintings on the wall- clear glass that opens to the outside and shows purple skies and a calm ambience, “This is nice.”

“You’re nice.” Dark eyes smile warmly and the knight feels a bit steady. He isn’t thinking anymore, the leash on his tongue is gone and his words are free. He’s worried about what he might say now that it’s just them too but that’s a problem for tomorrow.

“George,” Dream starts and the other hums, “It would be a shame to let your best knight go home without a kiss. Especially on such a lovely night.”

“Would it now?” The king says, tapping his fingers on the table, “We can’t have that, can we?”

“No we can’t.”

George looks at him carefully, “I don’t see anyone offering.”

“I don’t let just anyone kiss me,” He stares back, green meeting brown which dips into something more intense and he feels like he’s drowning again. He’s not sure if the chatter in the pub is muted or growing louder but he focuses on the other only.

“Tell me then, who do you let kiss you?”

*You*, he wants to say and he’s sure that the other knows. He wants George to kiss him till he forgets his own name, till all he knows is how the other feels against him, till there’s only one name that his mind chants. He wants to run his fingers along the small scars that the king hides on his back and he wants to press his lips against the moles on his collarbone. But he can’t say it, neither of them can say anything. Because they’re lucky enough to be even playing this game. Dream shouldn’t be allowed to dance around George and the king shouldn’t be allowed to take his hand every single time the knight offers. It’s a game they both play but they know that they can not win because those aren’t the rules, they were never part of the rules.

“You could find out,” Dream murmurs, “If you wanted to.” *If you could.*

“Maybe.” His voice is quiet and unfamiliar and suddenly George feels like he’s oceans away, like he’s the sun who sets on the horizon- a plane that only runs further and further the closer Dream tries to come. He’s thinking too much again, he could use another shot.

“You’re so far away,” The knight slouches and refuses to look at the other.

“Idiot, I’m sitting across a table,” The king laughs and walls crumble a bit, “I’m right here.”

But Dream wants him closer, he wants him here. He isn’t but he wishes the other was. The knight only sees a ravine that separates them, only knows the flooding oceans which no boat can sail across. He hates it- how George is right within his reach but never truly is. He hates it, he hates it, he hates it-

“I suppose so,” Dream mumbles and he’s still not looking at George. Untouchable and so divine- he hates it.

And when George catches his eye, something missing, something a little bitter- he thinks George hates it too.

~

*Who am I? I’m just a writer. I write things down.*

*I walk through your dreams and invent the future. Sure,*

*I sink the boat of love, but that comes later. And yes, I swallow*

*glass, but that comes later.*

*And the part where I push you*

*flush against the wall and every part of your body rubs against the bricks,*

*shut up*

*I’m getting to it.*

~

Dream has a duty.

It had been drilled into him as a child. Protection of the crown, sacrifice for the kingdom. Kneel before his king, swear his everything for a better future, a greater good. He knows this and he stands by it. He has to or else every candle which he blows out with a slash of his sword would haunt his every step, taunt his every breath. He thinks he has an army following him sometimes- not the knights, no not them. A legion of ghosts who cry and howl louder with every second he is still alive and curse him, snapping and pulling at his ankles.

“You should be asleep,” He leans against the doorframe, watching the king who quietly looks out the window. He looks terrible, skin pale and almost green, shirt off and revealing bandages. He smiles- it doesn’t fit his anymore, too big for his skinny face and too pained to really mean anything. Dream takes a slow breath in, he’s been pacing his days and haunting his nights for so long- ever since the ambush.

*“You’re worrying over this too much,” The king murmurs, “Eight sunsets and we’ll be back.”*

*The knight stares at him incredulously, for a moment forgetting his words and his arms go slack, “Those roads are infested. By vermin-”*

*“Dream,” The other leans back on his chair, sternness in his form, “Watch your tongue.”*

*“What I’m trying to say is that the pillagers have raided other nobles. Successfully.”*

*"I'm the king and I have my knights," And when that doesn't appease the blonde, he sighs and adds, "I have you."*

But Dream wasn't enough. The knights weren't enough and here they were, three weeks later where the king was comatose for two and gravely ill for the other. He remembers the face of the very bastard who struck an arrow through royal blood, he remembers the pain and fear in that bastard's eyes when the blonde twisted his arms harshly till he heard an inhumane crack.

"Have you changed your bandages yet?" There's a quiet 'no' and he clicks his tongue in mild disapproval, "Here, I'll help."

He knows where the bandages are by now, he's been injured enough to grow familiar with the herbalist's working stations. He knows where the poisons are held and where the antidotes are, he knows why the windows on the left are broken and what the terrible smell, one of musk, is. But he's never imagined he'd have to carry George here, have to lay him down while limp and cold. The walls seem a little more condescending and the sheets seem to scream with a blood thirst after their first taste of royal blood.

"Dream," George's voice is hoarse and makes him wince, faintly reminiscent of honey, "Stop standing there."

"Sorry," He mumbles, sitting on the side of the bed- behind George. His fingers are shaking, as if he touched the king, he would disappear into fantasy and never come again. He takes a deep breath as the other hums, needing something to distract himself.

"Who's this by?" Dream picks up the slim book on the bedside table, flipping through worn, yellow pages lazily and skimming past the words on the spine, "I don't recognise the name."

"A simpleton."

*" Especially the broken cries as your mind's hymns/ For these silent prayers are indeed the heart's uproar ,"* He reads out loud, "Doesn't sound like a simpleton."

The king hums, hands fluttering against the sheets and the other is reminded of pale skin and sickly breathing, "It's hopeless wishfulness."

"It's romance."

"As I said, a simpleton."

"Are you saying romance is hopeless?" Dream looks at him, caution laced in darker green eyes, and his fingers curl around the book. The world seems to hold its breath, refusing to speak or even let out a whisper for this one moment of time. The wind stops to consider and the sun grows a little dimmer.

"With the wrong people. Yes."

"Do you think love is for the simpletons?" He leans closer, turning his body so that he can feel the other breath on his lips, so close that all he can lose himself in is golden honey. He could kiss him- *he's untouchable* , he could claim him- *he's untouchable* , he could have him for this little moment away from the rest of the world-

*He's untouchable.*

"With the right people? No."

“What if I romanced you? Woo you till I spoiled you with all the stars?”

“I already own the world, you said so yourself,” George’s eyes flicker to the other’s lips and then back to green, “What use do I have for the stars? The moons?”

“You say that,” He starts and his hands stop shaking enough that he can run his fingers along the bandages on the other, “You say that but you must want at least something.”

“Or someone.” He barely catches it as he starts to untie the wet cloth carefully, apologising whenever the other hissed in pain. The king is looking at him.

“Or someone,” Dream echos and the old bandages fall to the floor- stained by a murkiness which makes his stomach roll. He dabs his fingers in the ointment, tracing along the wounds that run along his back and up around his shoulder blade. George tenses when their skin makes contact and the knight feels like he’s committing sin, touching something a mortal should never like a wounded deity.

He remembers blood on the snow- it was snowing the day he nearly lost George, the day he failed his king. It was snowing and it was beautiful, blankets of white covering the path and the branches of the tree. Kaleidoscopes of glimmer and pale blue, whispering and giggling the stories of every passing traveller, every passing horse and its carriage.

He remembers it all and he remembers the red. The crimson that seeped into something pure like snow, the kisses of the winter goddess. He remembers how he prayed and screamed at the sky as he clung to a barely beating corpse. The bandits paid, he recalls that with the flurry of red in which he cursed and banished them with. That day, the snow had been a blessing in disguise, Dream was in debt to the winter goddess- the lower temperatures slowing down the blood that gushed out and bringing the king into a more peaceful unconsciousness.

“Dream, I’m getting cold.” The knight blinks.

“Sorry-”

“Stop apologizing,” His voice is firm and solid, something Dream can latch onto and trust not to disappear, “Unroll the bandages, use the ointment on the left-”

He blindly listens to the other, mind switching off so he can ignore the way he feels like he’s burning when their skin meets, so he can ignore the guilt that makes his head go dizzy.

So he thinks about George, he thinks about how the king is divine like a god, more than a god. How the world seems to gravitate around him, entrapped in a spell no one understands and cares for enough to break free of. The world watches from afar, gorgeous flames that light everything up with a voice more golden than honey but none of them really know. None of them really understand.

Because Dream traverses with divinity everyday, he sins till his hands are of George, only know George. He comes close to the flames and he burns. Burns, burns, burns and he likes it. He worships his king, he pledges his life to his king. He’s always known, Dream has never forgotten that the other is untouchable- crowned by the stars aligned and cloaked by the sunlight. He can’t really touch the other, they’re too far apart-

“Will it scar?” He mumbles, fingers dancing on barely healed wounds- pink and soft.

“Yes.” He hears and his head spins, “Ugly lot, aren’t they?”

No, they aren't. He hates them because they're a reminder that Dream failed him- that the knight couldn't save his king. But he loves them because now the deity has fallen a little closer- vulnerable before him in a way that almost feels human. Now the blonde can feel him, tend to the faint scars they are embroidered and stitched onto another's back. Now, they're closer and he-

He wonders if he can do this.

Dream leans forward as the other's darker eyes widen. He leans down, rubbing his thumb against a scar that runs from the shoulder blade and to the heart, breathing on it. George shivers, chest pounding loud all of a sudden when Dream presses his lips, soft and fleeting, where the scar begins at the shoulder. He sinks lower, green eyes flickering up only once to see a deity, being worshipped wholly by his own follower- every bit of skin, every scar. The knight sinks till he reaches the end of the scar where he kisses it again and he hears a hitch in breath.

"No," He says quietly and George is too in love to say anything back. This is how the knight worships his god, adoring and entranced by every blessing, every curse. Every blemish, every beauty.

So they sit in silence. Neither of them saying a single word as Dream serenades every other scar on the king's body till the moon sets.

~

*For a while I thought I was the dragon.*

*I guess I can tell you that now. And, for a while, I thought I was*

*the princess,*

*cotton candy pink, sitting there in my room, in the tower of the castle,*

*young and beautiful and in love and waiting for you with*

*confidence*

~

They don't talk about it. Maybe they should but they don't. It's an unspoken rule, one glance and they both realise words will make the night real, that shattered glass breaks the rules of the game they've played for so long. They aren't ready, like children who nag to wander out the forest a little longer, live out the night till more stars come out. They're merely a knight and his king, the secret smiles and lingering touches mean nothing, really they don't.

"Is he looking?" Sapnap hushes beside him, shoulder stiff and fingers twitching. Dream laughs at him, the way his best friend's cheeks grow a flustered red.

"No." The blonde looks past the other's shoulders, eyeing brown locks and a bright smile, "He's talking to Tommy."

"I-make him talk to me," He turns to George who wears a grin like a devil, "George, please. I'm so much more interesting than Tommy."

"I can't make Karl Jacobs do anything he doesn't want to do," Sapnap pulls a face as the king nudges his arm, "He trusts his cards more than me."



It's cute, Dream thinks, whatever it is between the younger knight and the newcomer, a seer gifted from one of the kingdom's greater allies. He hasn't seen his best friend so excited before, bumbling and full of chatter with only one pair of eyes, with only one name stuck in his head while he unravelled into an incoherent mess when with the seer.

"I want to dance with him," He really should want to laugh at the younger knight's face, stubborn and pink, "It's his first Summer Festival. He should have fun."

The blonde looks away, taking in the bustling cheer of people- dressed in their most colourful and fitting frills and lace as they dance to strums of the guitar. The festival was a celebration of a good harvest, prayers for well weather and lovelier futures. The blazing down of the old and rise of the new, from ashes that used to be memories- the knights never missed the local festival. They dragged their king down with them, one day every year. They'd blend with the villagers, forgetting crowns and swords, as they grew drunk on a liveliness that was born only on summer nights.

"Why are you telling me this?" The taller man rolls his eyes, "He's right over there. Go ask him, you idiot."

"I can't." Sapnap isn't looking at either of them, eyes glued to the ground and his demeanour deflates. He looks like he's without hope and it hurts a bit to see his best friend like this. He shares a look with the king.

"Yes, yes you can," Golden honey is slightly stern and George levels down his knight with a sharp gaze, "What's the next dance?"

"Something for the common folk," He answers easily, "I think it's in pairs."

Sapnap still looks hesitant, "But he's so- he's really pretty."

"You're so pretty," Dream says and the other knight cracks a small smile, "C'mon Pandas, we both know he'll say yes to you."

"I hate you both. So much."

He looks at the seer again, laced in crystals that supposedly told the truth with beaded bracelets and coloured feathers in his hair. He is pretty, objectively, but it's not the same type of pretty that George is, the one that ruins him. The king is still in bandages, hidden by dark tunics that are a little big but even in the commoner's dress- he stands dominant among the crowd. He has soot on his cheek from when an old lady threw incense at them and the knight suddenly feels very lost when their eyes meet.

"Not yet you don't." The king smiles, the one he has when he's up to no good and Sapnap realises a little too late, "Karl, over here."

The other falters, breaking away from his conversation with Tommy, lips breaking into a big grin. Karl waves when Sapnap turns and Dream tries not to laugh when his best friend squeaks, frozen with every step the seer takes forward.

"What are you doing?" Sapnap hisses.

"He's going to be a nimrod. As usual." An airy voice, bells and whistles, comes behind and the younger knight simply freezes, "He's going to ask me for a reading. He doesn't actually want one."

"I would never," It's a cordial smile, one of politeness with hidden agenda and George puts his hands on his back, "But if I were to, what would happen next?"

“You will,” Karl mirrors the grin on the king, a knowing glint in his eyes when he looks at Sarnap who begins to hide behind Dream, “And then you’ll dance.”

“George hates to dance.” Dream pipes in, standing taller when the seer looks over him.

“With the wrong people, yes.”

The knight’s heart skips a beat as he looks away but he can feel darker eyes watching him. He watches the seer more carefully, wondering if the other understood the exact connotations of his words.

“Then?” Sarnap gains rationality, still meek and quiet..

“Then, nimrod,” Now the seer looks slightly bashful and it’s adorable really, “Maybe you’ll ask me to dance.”

“Will you say yes?” His best friend presses, no undertone of subtlety, just genuine hopefulness which throws off the other.

“You’ll have to find out,” Karl is smiling, “I can’t tell you everything now, can I?”

“George, ask for a reading.”

“No, I don’t think I will.”

“ *George-* ”

“Sap, it doesn’t matter,” The seer says softly, lacing their fingers together, “There’s more than one future remember?”

Then Karl takes the younger knight, dragging him into a bustling crowd- all dancing to the same song. Then the two completely forget about Dream and George, lost in song and each other and the quiet flush and shy smiles seem to mean something more.

“Why can’t we be like that?” Dream teases. They’re alone now.

“Do you want to be?” The king looks at him with dark eyes dipped in something he used to not recognise in the other, in himself. Mesmerisation, adoration- whatever you wanted to call it. It’s warm and it’s captivating, coming in and out like the tide- strong forces of nature that only listen to the moon. Then he realises, George looks at him like he’s the moon.

He shakes his head but the king is still staring.

“Do I have something on my face?”

“No,” The other looks away, “I just think you’d look nice with a crown.”

He falters, he wasn’t expecting that. He doesn’t let himself think about what it could mean, for him, for them. A crown, it’s as much of a confession either of them is willing to give right now and he- he can work with this.

“Only nice?”

George smiles, honey gold washing over Dream like a spell, “You look nicer with a sword. In a suit of armour. Stunning even. However.”

“However?”

“You look best,” George leans closer and it becomes very hard to breathe, the air grows heavier and his heart makes him think time is running faster. Say it, he wants to scream, say it and then kiss me. The knight then thinks of himself, thinks of the years that have been lost, the years that could have been spent with the king in his arms if they had stopped playing the game. There are so many things that need to be said, there wasn’t enough time in the world to get through them all but if they started now- maybe they had a chance.

“Love, you look best by my side. With me.”

Dream wants to kiss George. He wants to worship every scar, pray to every blessing that’s ever marked itself onto the other’s skin. He wants to offer a sacrifice to a divinity that guides him through the dark and he wants to build temples for a man who could own the stars and the skies. He’s beautiful, right here- with him.

“George,” He murmurs quietly, “What are we?”

“A king and his knight. I suppose,” George wraps his arms around the other’s neck, “But tonight, let’s be something more.”

“Like in your books?”

“Something more real than my books. Something more beautiful.”

*“Do you think love is for the simpletons?”*

*“With the right people? No.”*

“Am I?” He whispers barely and it’s the god of love who lets George hear, “Am I the right person?”

The orchestra begins to play but Dream almost wishes he could beg them to stop. Not now, when he has so much to say, so much to want. Everything he needs is here, waiting for him and his head spins as the rest of the world begins to dance.

“Gods I hope so,” The king shakes and dark eyes possess an intensity that could burn him, “Dream, I hope to all the skies but even if you weren’t- nothing would change.”

“And why is that?”

“Because,” Gold honey brings him back to the beginning, “I always choose you.”

“Always,” Dream echoes and when green meets brown-

Everything comes alive in a way that could destroy the world.

~

*but the princess looks into her mirror and only sees the princess,  
while I’m out here, slogging through the mud, breathing fire,  
and getting stabbed to death.  
Okay, so I’m the dragon. Big deal.*

*You still get to be the hero.*

## End Notes

heyo~

ahhhhhhhhhhhhh. okay i don't usually jump on dnf cliches but royalty aus are so good and I wanted to experiment with a different type of pining. (something more mature and devoted). Hope you enjoy it!!! on a side note, finally got an incredible idea for a banger day 6 fic (if you've read my other works). If you know me on tumblr, I've been in rivaltw (dream and techno reluctant friends) brainrot recently. so look forward to that. also if I made a discord server, how would ya'll feel?

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xoxo winter

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